



Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 13 Issue 3 : Autumn 2010

Editorial

Just for once our Summer Walks this year were all blessed with excellent weather. We must be doing something right! In this issue you will find accounts of the final two outings, to Mardale and Caermote. The Mardale walk in particular was very well-attended and much enjoyed by all who came along.

In July, you may remember, we planned to conduct a geophysical survey at Ninekirks. Overleaf, Martin Railton brings us up to date with what was found.

Looking ahead, you may also remember the announcement in the last issue of our plans for excavation of the Roman signal station at Brackenber. I am now pleased to be able to report that Paul Frodsham's "Altogether Archaeology" project has agreed to fund us. Read on to get the latest position on Altogether Archaeology from our Chairman, Richard Stevens

We've finalized this winter's lecture programme and you might like to note the details at the end of the Newsletter. The full programme can be found on the website. Get the dates in your diaries now while you remember.

Thoughts of winter lectures remind me of another piece of good news. I think you will be pleased to hear that over the summer we acquired a new digital projector with the aid of a grant of £330 from Cumbria County Council's Eden Area "Neighbourhood Forum". You may have noticed that the old projector was getting a bit dim. Well, you may want to bring some dark glasses with you to future meetings! Our sincere thanks to Neighbourhood Forum.

Martin Joyce



A Tour of Historic Mardale

On June 19th around a dozen members assembled in the sunshine at the car park opposite the Heritage Centre in Shap, looking forward to a guided tour of Mardale. Jean Jackson and Jean Scott-Smith from the Shap Local History Society were our guides for the afternoon and they proved to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the dale and the surrounding area.

Between Burn Banks and Mardale Green at the end of the road, the group made a number of stops. At each one, our guides pointed out the locations of the major settlements, such as Measand and Whelter on the west bank of the lake, as well as a number of homesteads that had been engulfed when the reservoir was filled in the 1930s. There are extant remains of many of the homesteads – some of those above the final fill level of the reservoir were simply demolished. We were also entertained with a number of anecdotes about some of the past residents, including the Holme family of Bowderthwaite, otherwise known as the 'Kings of Mardale'.

Other places of particular interest were the sites of the Dun Bull Inn, once the venue for hunts and shepherd's



Haweswater dam under construction

meets (and doubtless many happy hours of late night drinking), the church and, of course, the 'Corpse Road' to Shap.

Mardale was once a very busy place, located as it was on the ancient road between Kendal and

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Penrith via the Nan Bield pass. I have to report that it is still a pretty busy spot on a summer afternoon, although I fear both the travellers and their conveyances are somewhat different these days.

The group returned to the heritage centre in Shap where we were treated to a delightful feast of home made cakes and cups of tea as we perused the displays. Jean and Jean were roundly thanked for their excellent tour.

Incidentally, if you have never visited the Heritage Centre in Shap, I would highly recommend it.

Richard Stevens

More information:

<http://www.shaphistorysociety.org.uk/>
<http://www.cumbrian-lad.com/Memories.htm>
<http://www.thingstodolakedistrict.co.uk/>
Interesting_Articles_about_the_Lake_District/Mardale_History/

Caermote Roman Fort and the Whittas Park Cairn field

Sadly only four members were there to enjoy an interesting and enjoyable walk on Sunday 12th July. Mark Graham, who led the walk, spoke at the March meeting when he told us about landscape surveys around Bassenthwaite, part of the *Unlocking Hidden Heritage Project* (a summary of this talk can be found on the Group's website).

First we went to look at the site of Caermote Fort. The landscape survey clearly identified the sites of two forts, roadways, banks ditches and built structures within the smaller fort. These features were harder to identify on the ground but some were more clearly visible when we looked down on the site from the cairn field. The forts were never constructed in stone and their purpose is unclear, but they may have been intended to protect the transport of lead from the Caldbeck mines.

We then crossed over the road and started a gentle climb to the cairn field. On our way we could see a structure ahead. Was it a tower, part of a lime kiln, a large trig point? What we found was a rather elegant fireplace and chimney flu within the remains of a wall. No one seems to know anything about it and we were left wondering who

built it and why.

The cairn field was intriguing. The landscape survey has identified more than 50 cairns. Cairns are common features in the landscape, but without excavating it is difficult to tell whether they cover burials or are just heaps of stone cleared from fields. Dating is very difficult as field clearance could have started in the bronze age and continued to recent times.

Mark pointed out several cairns which were in alignment, had rectilinear features and or circular features



Whittas Park

attached. These are likely to have been sheilings used in the summer months when stock was taken to graze on the higher ground. They could have been in use from the early medieval period. One feature, that had us all guessing, was more complex. It lay on a slope and had several rectilinear features which, in part, formed a cross-like structure. Could it have been means of herding and sorting out stock? Our imaginations did conjure up ideas of a places to worship or a communal gathering place - perhaps an early village hall!

We then climbed higher to a possible prehistoric site where traces of a long track way can be seen leading to a flat topped hill and several large stones. The land around the stones is clear of vegetation and the setting is dramatic, surrounded by fells and overlooking Bassenthwaite to the south and across the Solway to the west. A bronze age burial has been recorded on the top of nearby Binsey Hill suggesting, perhaps, that these stones were part of a bronze age landscape. Grampus Heritage volunteers with some assistance from North Pennines Archaeology completed some excavations there this summer which indicate that though some of the stones were set there by man there is as yet no conclusive evidence. It was a dramatic situation and the scenery was stunning as

the sunshine broke through a cloudy sky. It did not take much imagination to see that this is a special place.

Walking back to our cars we commented on what an enjoyable walk it had been. As is so often the case, more questions remained unanswered than were answered. Mark was thanked for giving us such an interesting and enjoyable time.

Martin Railton

Geophysical Survey at Ninekirks

Over the weekend of 17th & 18th July members of Appleby Archaeology Group and the U3A joined forces to survey land close to St Ninian's Church near Brougham (commonly known as Ninekirks). There is cropmark evidence for a possible monastic enclosure in the field next to the church, which could possibly have been founded by St Ninian at the end of the 4th Century. There are also believed to be associations with the Roman fort at Brougham, and in 1914 a hoard of 3rd century coins was discovered by a grave digger.

With permission of the landowner and English Heritage



(the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument) we set about

Resistivity surveying at Ninekirks : 2010

surveying a section across the field using a resistance meter, targeting an oval cropmark enclosure as seen on air photographs of the site. It was particularly hard and

slow going as the field was covered in numerous cobbles which the probes of the resistance meter kept hitting! These had been left by the floods which had stripped the field of topsoil earlier in the year. Nevertheless we persevered, and completed a 40m-wide section across the field.

The survey revealed a very clear linear feature, believed to be a section of the northern ditch of the oval enclosure. Air photographs seem to show small rectangular structures within the enclosure. The geophysical survey seemed to confirm this as some linear features were detected within the enclosure as well as the foundations of a possible rectangular building. Unfortunately we did not cover enough of the site over the two days to be able to interpret these features with any certainty, and further work is needed in order to get a clear picture of the site. A survey was also conducted using gradiometers (borrowed from North Pennines Archaeology) but these were not as effective as the resistance meter at the site in detecting the buried archaeology.

Whilst we were surveying, Mr John Westrop from Hornby Hall came to visit us and kindly donated his finds from several years of walking over the field. These include numerous sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery, as well as some possible Roman sherds and some worked flint. The donated finds will be kept in the group's research archive until they can be studied further.

Martin Railton

Altogether Archaeology Project

On 27th July, Martin Railton and I attended the launch event for the North Pennines AONB "Altogether Archaeology" Project at St. John's Chapel in Weardale. You may remember Paul Frodsham talking briefly about his hopes for this project when he addressed us in April, and since then, Martin, in his capacity as our Fieldwork and Research Officer, has been liaising with the AONB on our behalf. The launch event was an interesting and entertaining evening attended by around 150 people. There were talks by Rob Young (English Heritage) on the Bollinhope Common Project, Stuart Ainsworth (English Heritage) on the Miner-Farmer Project and a discussion on the overall aims of the Altogether Ar-

chaeology Project chaired by Chris Woodley-Stewart, Director of the North Pennines AONB Partnership.

In the Spring 2010 newsletter, the editor wrote briefly about our intention to further investigate the Roman Signal Station on Brackenber Moor, on which the group carried out a geophysical survey in 2009.

We're happy to announce that this work will now be one of the ten initial fieldwork modules funded by the Altogether Archaeology Project. Martin Railton must be relieved – I'm sure he didn't exactly relish the idea of filling in the reams of paper required to apply for grant funding to English Heritage, who would have been our next port of call. All our members are of course welcome to take part in the work at Brackenber, the dates of which will be advised in due course.

All volunteers who have registered as individuals with Altogether Archaeology will receive updates on and invitations to take part in all of the Project modules, including the Miner-Farmer Project and possibly the excavations at Binchester Roman Fort, as well as receiving notification of any other events yet to be formulated. If you would like to take part in any of these activities, you can register by either telephoning Paul on 01388 528801 or by emailing him. His email address is show below. By the time you read this, there will already have been two events, a walk around Whitley Castle guided by Stuart Ainsworth and a tour of Binchester by the Durham County Archaeologist, so there's plenty of good things going on.

Details of the Project can be found on the AONB website, address below. It is important to remember that this is a Community Project and it's not just up to the AONB to think up events - "Altogether" means altogether! Ideas for walks or other events from everyone involved are encouraged, so if you have a particular archaeological bee in your bonnet – let Martin know and he'll put it forward.

Our thanks to Martin for succeeding in getting the Signal Station included in the Project.

Richard Stevens

Paul Frodsham's email address:
pfordsham@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

More information:
www.northpennines.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14474

Autumn Programme

Lancaster's Delftware Industry - Recent excavations of an important post-medieval delftware pottery in Lancaster City

Tuesday 14th Sept

Matthew Town,
 North Pennines Archaeology

The impact and legacy of the arrival of the Scots in Dalradia in the 5th Century

Tuesday 12th Oct

Sheena Gemmel

Excavations at Brougham of the civilian settlement to the east of the Roman fort, Brocavum

Tuesday 9th November

Oxford Archaeology North 2008

2009 Excavation at Boroughgate, Appleby

Tuesday 14th December

Martin Railton
 North Pennines Archaeology



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